

WIGSTON MAGNA LAY SUBSIDIES

1327 to 1599

BY W. G. HOSKINS, M.Sc. (ECON.), PH.D.

Wigston Magna Lay Subsidies

1327 to 1599

By W. G. Hoskins, M.Sc. (Econ.), Ph.D.

WIGSTON Magna was, unfortunately, one of the few villages the late Mr. Farnham was unable to deal with in his *Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes*. In the hope that one day someone will write the history of this important and interesting village, I have transcribed the relevant lay subsidy lists between 1327 and 1599, as a contribution towards the history of the ordinary families of the parish, an aspect of village history which is so often neglected.

The lists are given in the following pages with the minimum of comment; but I hope to deal with the vicissitudes of Wigston families at greater length in a later paper. The value of the lists for genealogical purposes is obvious; they also give a good idea of the relative wealth and standing of the various families. On the other hand, they cannot be used, except in two or three particular cases, as a means of estimating population at any given time.

Thus the subsidy list of 1327 supplies us with 39 names, but a study of the *Wyggeston Hospital Records* round about this date gives us twelve other surnames not mentioned in this list: Randolf, Polling, Cage, Le Feuere, Freman, Gamel, Wiking, Aniot, Coc, Toki, Swetyng and Palmer. Moreover, these families are all landholders, and there must have been still others too poor to be assessed and also too insignificant to appear in the *Wyggeston Hospital Records* in any way—cottagers and labouring families with no land. There may have been nine or ten such families in such a large village, giving a probable total for Wigston in 1327 of about sixty households. The subsidy list therefore enumerates about two-thirds of the probable number of families living at the time in Wigston; and the same must have been roughly true for other villages.¹

The unreliableness of the poll tax returns of 1377 and 1381 in reflecting the true population is well known, but as these

¹The subsidy list of 1333 gives us six new names also for Wigston.

returns do not exist. For Wigston Magna we need not discuss this question. No other detailed subsidy lists exist until we reach the comprehensive assessments of 1524 and 1525, which drew the great majority of the village population, in all places, within their scope. Perhaps a few of the poorest families escaped this levy also, but we should not be far wrong in allowing only about five per cent. of the total population as non-taxable in 1524-5.

At Wigston Magna sixty-six names are listed in the assessment of April 13, 1524, and a similar number in a second assessment dated January 6, 1524-5. The surnames on the two lists are not quite identical, even allowing for the illegible entries on both, so that there were perhaps seventy households represented altogether in these lists.² The return of population made for the Archdeaconry of Leicester in 1564 (quoted by Nichols) gives the number of families in Wigston at that date as eighty. There is no reason to suspect the truth of this figure; it appears to be reliable enough for other parishes where it can be checked. If this is so, the seventy or so households of 1524-25 must have been the true population, with possibly three or four pauper families, at the most, omitted.

Generally speaking, then, the subsidy lists for 1524 and 1525 may be regarded as an accurate reflection of the true population at that time, with a possible allowance of about five per cent. for non-taxable households. For the remainder of the sixteenth century the lay subsidy lists are important only for family history. They are of not the slightest value as an index of population.

LAY SUBSIDY, 1327

William, son of Simon	6s.
Richard Swan	3s.
William Spire	3s.
Simon Poney	3s. 6d.
William Balle	7s.
Agnes Swan	13s.
William Jones	2s.

²We are fairly safe in assuming that each name represents the head of a household, except possibly among those of the same surname assessed on wages. Brothers or father and son living in one household would upset this assumption, but such instances would be few in days when marriage was early and general. For the great majority of men a wife and family were a necessary help in the earning of a living, especially on the land.

John Noreys	2s.
Walter Coke	14d.
Ralph Tugge	5d.
——— Nollynge	?6s. 6d.
Henry Swan	15s. —
Richard Gylemyn	18s. —
Isold Bek	9 —
Richard Godewyne	6 —
Thomas de Walton	4s.
Robert de Walton	12d.
John Baconn	3s.
Robert de Thorp	2s.
William Betrych	12d.
John Fryday	5 —
Henry Catel	3s ?
John Hutte	8s.
John Faucous	6s.
John Maggesone	2s.
John Perys	18d.
John Sweyn	8d.
Simon Lawe	8d.
William Attewell	8d.
Henry Jowett	12d.
Emma Smith	12d.
Crispian Gilbert	12d.
Adam Jones	6d.
Richard Wylham	12d.
Amicia Robert	2s.
Walter de Carleton	4s.
Ralph Haudekyn	3s.
John Stevene	12d.
John de Evynton	9s. 10d.

LAY SUBSIDY, 1333.

Wygeston—William aBoueton'	3s.
William atte Barre	4s.
William Ernold	6s.
William, son of Ralph	4s.
John Drake	3s.
Geoffrey Framelyn	4s.

Total 24s.

As the poll tax returns for Wigston Magna are now missing, a regrettable loss when we have so much other information about the fourteenth-century families from the *Wygeston Hospital Records*, the following list of names taken from three grants of

land in 1393 and 1395 may serve as a substitute to some extent for the poll tax list.³ Such a list cannot, of course, claim to be complete, but neither are most subsidy lists.

OCCUPIERS OF LAND AT WIGSTON, 1393-95.

Amice Haukyn	William Faukes
Emma Haukyn	John Holdenby
William Penne	Adam Kyde
Richard Friday	John Brigge
John Hutte	Henry Astel
John Faukes	John Swetyng
Emma Baker	Richard Tugge
William Swetyng	Thomas Catell
Thomas Smyth	William Kyrkedowe
John Skynner	Robert Pollyng
John Elen	Richard Magson
John Randulf	William Smyth the elder
Roger Alot	William Jewet
Thomas Kooc	Isabel Eyrik
John Cok	John Pauey
Henry Noreis	John Gamell
Richard Swetyng	Henry Wypftoft
William Mathew	Alice Swan
Richard Randolf	John Faukes the elder
William Cook	John Sturdy
Henry Harcourt, chaplain	Robert Symond
John Friday	Alice Smyth
Thomas Hutte	William Clay
Thomas Gylbert	

A number of these families were already of considerable antiquity in the village. Robert Gamel is mentioned in an undated grant as far back as the 1260's; he would have been a descendant of some Danish settler of the late ninth or early tenth century by the name of Gamall. Robert Symond is in all probability the descendant of Henry Symun or Richard his brother who witnessed a covenant on January 21, 1260. Oldest of all were the Herricks, for a Henry Eyrig witnessed a grant and confirmation some time between 1247 and 1260 at Wigston. This, too, is a Danish personal name. The Randulfs or Randolfs were descended from the Ranulf living in Wigston before the middle of the thirteenth century; the Friday family is of similar

³*Wyggeston Hospital Records* (ed. Hamilton Thompson), docs. No. 977-979.

antiquity, and so also are the Cooks, for Henry Coc witnessed a grant and confirmation between 1247 and 1260. From 1327 the surname of Smith occurs frequently in Wigston records. Probably the Henry the smith and the William the cook who were witnesses to a grant of land shortly before 1260 were the forebears of the Smith and Cook families respectively.

We now come to the important assessments of 1524 and 1525. The subsidy dated January 6, 16 Henry VIII [1524-5] is very rubbed, almost illegible in places. Some names can be supplied from the list of April 13, 15 Henry VIII [1524]; others cannot be made out at all.

LAW SUBSIDY, Jan. 6. 1524-5.

WYGESTON.

William Astell, constable	in goods	x li.	v ^s	
Robert Wryght	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Henry Eyrcke	in goods	v li.	ijs	vjd
Robert Whyte	in goods	vj li.	iijs	
Richard Ball	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Robert Palley	in goods	v li.	ijs	viiij ^d
Thomas Whyte	in goods	xiiij li.	vjs	vjd
Robert Frer	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d	
Thomas Jervys	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Richard Harvy	in goods	iv li.	ijs	
William Chamburleyn	in goods	xvj li.	viijs	
John —————	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
John —————	in goods	ix li.	ivs	vjd
John Walker	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
John Palley	in goods	iv li.	iijs	
Jamys Stafford	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
William Parsons	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
William Whyte	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
William Alwode	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Thomas Rosse	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Thomas Palley	in goods	ix li.	ivs	vjd
Henry Palley	in goods	iv li.	ijs	
John Shepperd	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
John None	in goods	iiij li.	xviiij ^d	
William Johnson	in goods	iiij li.	xviiij ^d	
Robert Peylton	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d	
William Freybe	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
William Stanton	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Robert Weston	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d	
Richard Burgs	in goods	iv li.	ijs	
Robert Wheytley	in goods	iv li.	ijs	

Richard Poll (? Pell)	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
John Rydley	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
Thomas _____			
William _____	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
John Knyght	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
William _____	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
Robert Browne	in goods	iv li.	ijs
Margye Pynder	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
Henry Langton	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
Robert Langton	in goods	iiij. li.	xviiij ^d
Robert Ferrys	in goods	iiij. li.	xviiij ^d
Thomas _____	in goods	iv li.	ijs
John Colson	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
William Colson	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
William Lewyn	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
Thomas Huggulscot	in goods	vj li.	iijs
William Cetton	in goods	v li.	ijs vj ^d
Robert Mylner	in goods	vj li.	iijs
William Kynde	in goods	iv li.	ijs
Robert Vanne	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
James Wattes	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
William Clerke	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
Richard Mylner	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
Thomas Burges	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
Richard Eyrcke	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
John Brabbson	in goods	iiij. li.	xviiij ^d
Thomas Colson	in goods	iv li.	ijs
William Walles	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
Robert Frere	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d
Margarett Watts	in goods	iv li.	ijs
John Pynder	in goods	xl ^s	xij ^d
William Smyth	in goods	vj li.	iijs
Henry ? Cowrdbc	in goods	xx ^s	iiij ^d

As the subsidy of April 13, 1524, contains several names not found on that of 1525, I give this also, omitting assessments for reasons of space:—

Henry Eyrcke	John Palley
Robert Whyte	Thomas Palley
Robert Palley	John Shepperd
Thomas Whyte	John None
Robert Frer	Ame Van
William Chamburleyn	William Johnson
Richard Harve	Robert Peylton
John Amorey	William Freybe

William Astyll	Robert Vanne
Richard Burgs	John Savage
Robert Whetley	Richard Eyrcke
Robert Palmer	James Brabson
Robert Browne	Thomas Colson
Margere Pynder	Richard Mylner
Robert Ferrys	William Kynd
Thomas Savage	William Smyth
John Colson	John Pynder
William Lewen	Margarett Watts
Thomas Huggulscote	William Wallys
William Catton	Henry Cowrdb
Robert Mylner	

The following 25 men were assessed on "wages", at 20 shillings, to pay 4d. tax :—

Richard Bell	William Losbe
Thomas Jervys	William ? Tong
John Walker	John Knyght
Reginald Carter	Richard Rydley
Jamys ———	Thomas Alen
William Whyte	William Symon
William Allewode	William Colson
Thomas Rosse	James Walker
William Stanton	William Clerke
Robert Weston	Thomas Burgeys
William Astyll	Robert Frer
Richard Pell	John Nycoll
John Rydley	

The subsidy list of 1543, which is usually a very full one, is missing for Wigston Magna, and the later subsidies are brief. They are as follows :—

Lay Subsidy, March 28, 36 Henry VIII, 1545.

Wiggeston—Symond Catesbye	13/4
William Astell	26/8
John Amerye	16/0
Agnes Heyryke, widowe	8/0
William Warde	10/0
Robert Browne	13/4
Androwe Flyght	10/0
Thomas Whyt	10/0
John Noone	8/0
Thomas Hucclescott	8/0

Lay Subsidy, 30 April, 3 Edward VI, 1549.

Wygston—	William Warde	in goods	£10	subsidy	10/0
	William Astell	do.	£10		10/0
	Andrew Flute	do.	£10		10/0
	George Tybson	do.	£10		10/0

Lay Subsidy, no date. (Listed as Edward VI.)

Wygston magna—

William Astell, baker	for goods	subsidy	10/0
Robert Brown, husbandman	for goods		10/0
William Warde, husbandman	for goods		10/0
Andrew Flwyte, husbandman	for goods		10/0

Lay Subsidy, no date. (Listed as Philip and Mary).

Wygston magna—

George Tymson	in goods	£6	subsidy	10/0
Thomas Wattes	in goods	100/-		8/4
Joan Astyll, widow	in goods	100/-		8/4
Robert None	in goods	100/-		8/4
William Clerke	in goods	100/-		8/4
Richard Coltman	in lands	20/-		2/8
William Palley	in lands	20/-		2/8

Total 48/8

Lay Subsidy, assessed between 1 April, 1571 and 2 Oct. 1571.

Wygston magna—

George Tybson	in goods	£6	subsidy	10/0
William Molde	in goods	£6		10/0
Thomas Watts	in goods	£5		8/4
Stephane Astell	in goods	£5		8/4
Walter Clerke	in goods	£4		6/8
Richard Coltman	in lands	20/-		2/8
John Bersley	in goods	£5		8/4

Total 53/4

Lay Subsidy, 18 September, 1577.

Wigston magna—

Thomas Watts	in goods	£4		4/0
Stephen Astell	in goods	£4		4/0
John Bearsley	in goods	£3		3/0
Walter Clark	in goods	£4		4/0
William Johnson, senior	in goods	£3		3/0
Richard Colteman	in lands	20/0		1/4
William Frear	in goods	£3		3/0
Robert Clark	in goods	£3		3/0

Total 25/4

Lay Subsidy, 27 September, 1594.

Wigston—

John Dan	in lands	20/0	4/0
Richard Cowlman	in lands	20/0	4/0
William Lawe	in goods	£5	13/4
Robert Hall	in goods	£4	10/8
Stephen Astell	in goods	£4	10/8
Thomas Wattes	in goods	£3	8/0
Henry Chamberlyn	in goods	£3	8/0
Robert Clarke	in goods	£3	8/0

Total £3. 6s. 8d.

Lay Subsidy, September, 1599.

Wigston magna—

William Lawe, gent.	in goods	£6	16/0
Robert Halle	in goods	£4	10/8
Thomas Bent	in goods	£3	8/0
Robert Fryer	in goods	£3	8/0
Robert Clarke	in goods	£3	8/0
William Johnson	in goods	£3	8/0
Richard Coltman	in lands	20/0	4/0
William Danne	in lands	20/0	4/0

Total £3. 6s. 8d.

The population of Wigston Magna in 1524-25 must have been about seventy families; by 1564 it amounted to eighty families. A list of 1605 in the Bishop's Registry at Lincoln gives a figure of 380 communicants at Wigston in that year. This would include all the people over sixteen years of age; probably there were an equal number of children under sixteen, giving a total population of round about 750 at the beginning of the seventeenth century, or perhaps one hundred and twenty families. There was, therefore, a rapid growth in the population of Wigston in the second half of the sixteenth century, a statement which is corroborated by the large number of new names found in the parish register from its beginning in 1567 up to the end of the century. Such "new" families in the village during Elizabeth's reign were the Boulters, the Moulds, the Coltmans, the Danns, the Crosos, and many others. Indeed, it would not be difficult to list the names of the forty new families between 1564 and 1600; but the explanation of this remarkable growth of population must be left for a more appropriate occasion.